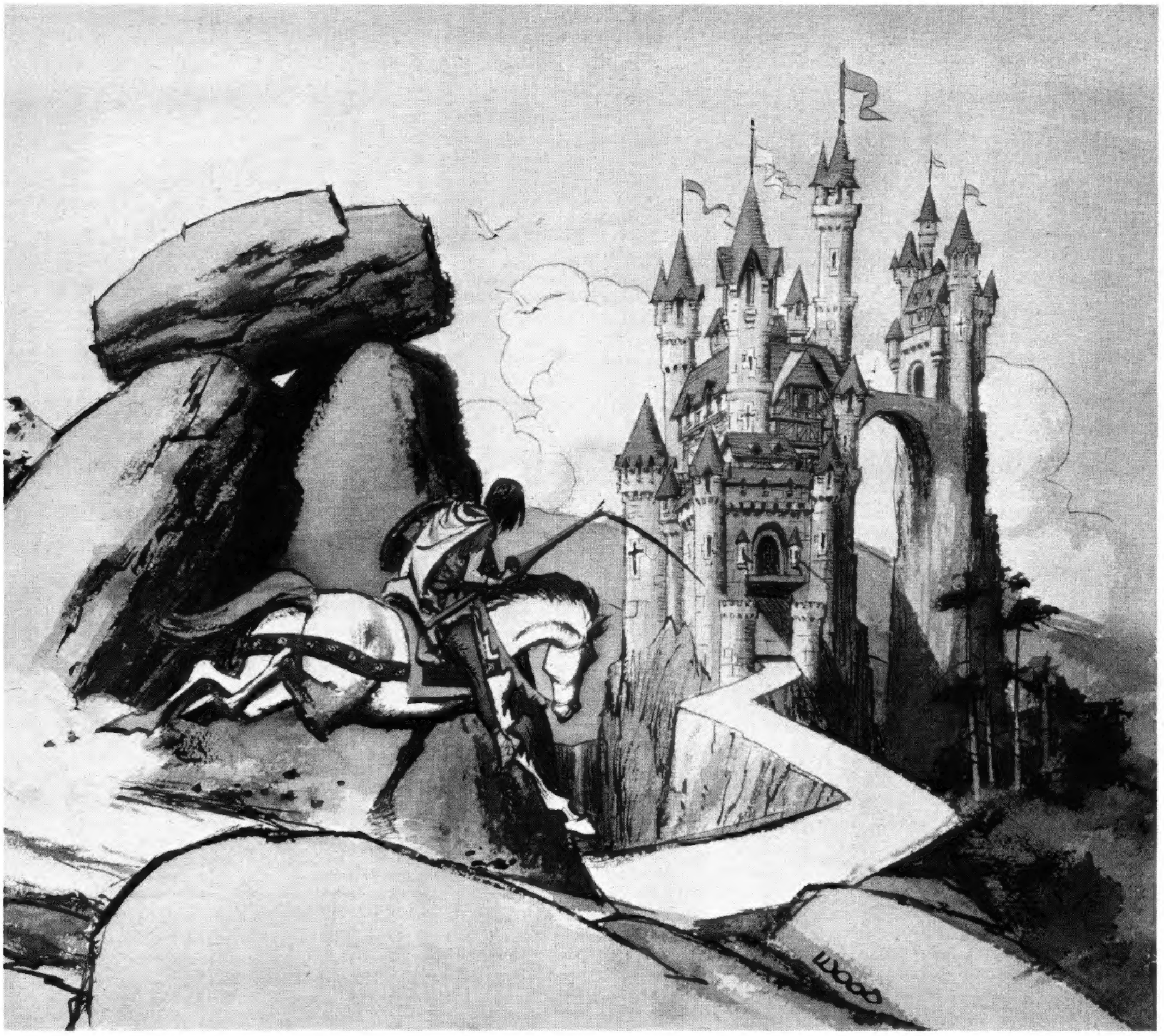
witzend

NO. 4 ONE DOLLAR



WORDS FROM WOOD

This time, and perhaps from now on, I have decided to dispense with editorial attempts to explain what this book is all about and get right to business.

THE BIG NEWS!

I am going to continue publishing Witzend, possibly indefinitely. But DEFINITELY up to and including #8, so...

SEND MONEY!

Order the next issue now, or better yet, feel free to order the next four. It is to your benefit, as well as mine—you will be sure of getting your copy, and getting it hot off the press.

As some of you have noticed (and have reminded me), I had promised this issue for December. I must not do that... I just cannot predict with any certainty when the next issue will be out, or how many issues per year.

Also, I neglected to give credit to Roy G. Krenkel for the illustration to "Vanessa"; and I announced Al Williamson's job, which WILL APPEAR, but when Al has time from his strip.

We've had our share of goofs, and some people got their copy of the last issue after an inexcusable delay, but everything is under control now. We have a file-card system and are currently getting out one mailing per week. As far as I know, every copy that was ordered was delivered; except for a few returned copies without a forwarding address. So PLEASE, if you move, or plan to move, let us know.

If you have moved since ordering Witzend, please send us a card with your old and new address. We have a few identical names with different addresses in our files, and we would like to bring them up to date.

FOREIGN SUBSCRIBERS...
Please send a letter as well as the international money order, so we know which issue (or issues) you want, and so far the post office has had a 100% record of getting the addresses and names wrong on the money orders.

FOR THE FUTURE...
As we run out of copies, we will automatically extend subscriptions to the next number, as we have already done with #1. For instance, a 4-issue subscription as of now is listed as ordering #2, #3, #4 and #5. We are nearly out of #2, so when they are all gone the same will apply; #3, #4, #5 and #6...

INQUIRIES ABOUT WITZEND #1
We are completely out, and do not know of anyone who has copies for sale.

GOOD NEWS FOR REED CRANDALL ERB FANS!
I have received more illustrations, so it will continue in the next issue.

FOUR BILLS AND A BHOB!
Thanks to Bill Harris for various help and encouragement; to Bill Gaines for plugging Witzend in MAD and for promising to let me print some NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED EC 3-D SCIENCE FICTION STORIES! Don't forget! Tell your friends! (They will not be printed in 3-D, of course, but are perfect for black-and-white reproduction.) And to Bill Yoshida for his patience and painstaking care with all the impossible assignments I've given him for cheap money. Last but not least; Wild Bill Pearson, for taking time out from his other jobs and his own publication called "PROFUSELY illustrated" (watch for it!) to do so many editorial, writing and production chores for me. Bhob Stewart, one of the all-time Good Guys, collaborated with me on the "Rejects" script.

PLEASE—Accompany all manuscripts or art with self-addressed, stamped envelope; or, preferably, send stats or Xerox copies which do not need to be returned.

NO SPECIAL HANDLING
Postage is included in the price. Sorry, individual attention to orders is impossible.

PLEASE USE ZIP CODE!

If you are interested in what's happening in the fan field, you can do no better than to order the ROCKET'S BLAST—COMICOLLECTOR from G.B. Love, 9875 S.W. 212th St., Miami, Florida 33157. It is an adzine that covers fan publications, dealers, everything of interest to fans and collectors. My ad in his book has helped me tremendously.

I would like to recommend...

SERIAL QUARTERLY

A quality publication dealing with movie serials. The current issue features BUCK ROGERS, starring BUSTER CRABBE. (This is a must for anyone interested in heroic action pictures or comic heroes on the screen.)

Send $1.50 for current issue to—
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A complete list of all Screen Facts publications will be sent with the issue.

FLASH!

GORDON, THAT IS!

Nostalgia Press proudly announces the publication of ALEX RAYMOND'S classic comic strip in a large 11 x 14, hard cover book! (I have received my copies and the reproduction is fabulous.)

Order NOW!
It's a
LIMITED
EDITION!
Price: $11.95
Plus 50¢ postage

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(Send check
or money order,
no cash.)

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PIPSQUEAK PAPERS

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THE ONE TRULY REMARKABLE THING ABOUT NUDINE WAS THAT, NO MATTER HOW TERRIBLE OR DEGRADING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE DAY BEFORE, SHE WOKE EACH MORNING WITH HER VIRTUE MIRACULOUSLY RESTORED...

OH, MY GOODNESS!

HOW IS IT?

I BEG YOUR PARDON.. HOW IS WHAT?

YOUR GOOD-NESS, BABY... HOW IS IT?

AT A LOSS FOR A REPLY TO THE STRANGE CREATURE'S OVERTURE, NUDINE COUNTERED WITH A CHARACTER-ISTIC QUERY...

ARE YOU A MAN?

SURE AM, HONEY.. AND WHAT ARE YOU?

I'M A NYMPH!

NO, JUST A NYMPH!

A NYMPH? OH!

TIRING OF THIS REPARTEE, HE DECIDED TO DISPENSE WITH THE FORMALITIES AND PRO-CEEDED TO ABDUCT HER ON THE SPOT...

OH, SIR! NO! STOP! DON'T! WHAT ARE YOU THINKING OF, SIR?

OH, IF ONLY I WEREN'T JUST A DEFENSELESS LITTLE FEMALE...

I DON'T UNDERSTAND..

STOP!

OH, HONEY! THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE HERE! HE TRIED TO ABDUCT ME! SMASH HIS FACE IN! RIP OUT HIS GUTS! KICK HIM IN...

PREPARE TO DEFEND YOURSELF, FELLOW!

IT IS ONLY FITTING NOW THAT WE DRAW A DISCREET CURTAIN OVER THE SCENE OF SICKENING BRUTALITY THAT ENSUED...

..AND LOOK IN UPON SMUG THE SCIENTIST, WHO HAD LONG BROODED OVER THE THEFT OF HIS HAND-MADE HUMANOID..

THAT DAMNED PIP-SQUEAK!

THERE IS JUST ONE COURSE OPEN TO ME...

MUCH AS I DISLIKE VIOLENCE, I MUST CALL ***THE COLLECTOR!***

UPON HEARING THIS DRASTIC DECISION, SMUG'S INSECTOID ASSISTANT "FLITTER" WAS AGHAST..

I'M AGHAST! NOT HIM! NOT THE COLLECTOR!

YES! AND NONE OF YOUR BLEEDING HEART NONSENSE. GO SUM-MON HIM AT ONCE!

RELUCTANTLY, THE FAITHFUL FLITTER COMPLIED, AND SOON..

WHO CALLS THE COLLECTOR?

I.. I DO, YOUR AWESOME FRIGHTFUL-NESS!

... AND YOU WILL FIND THIS DISHONEST PIPSQUEAK, AND COL-LECT ONE ADULT HUMA-NOID BODY, OR ... WELL, I'LL LEAVE THE CON-SEQUENCES TO YOU..

AND SO, WITH ADMIRABLE SINGLE-MINDED-NESS, THE COLLECTOR SET OFF ON HIS ERRAND, DETER-MINED TO LET NOTHING STAND IN HIS WAY..

AS, MEANWHILE PIP ALLOWED HIS BEATEN OPPONENT TO ESCAPE (BARELY) WITH HIS LIFE..

AND NOW... ?

...AND TURNED TO NUDINE, ONLY TO FIND SHE WAS NO LONGER IN EVIDENCE...

HEARING FAINT SOUNDS OF STRUGGLE, PIP FOLLOWED THEM TO A NEARBY BUTTERBUSH BRAMBLE, WHERE HE FOUND HIS LOVE AGAIN VAINLY ATTEMPTING TO DEFEND HER VIRTUE...

NO! HELP! DON'T! STOP! NO! PLEASE! HELP! DON'T! WOW! STOP!

NUDINE! WHAT THE HELL-? ?

NUDINE, I'M GETTING ARM WEARY AND FOOT-SORE DEFENDING YOU!

HOW COME YOU'RE ALWAYS BEING MOLESTED?

WELL, GEE... WHAT CAN I DO? I'M JUST A HELPLESS..

IN THE PROCESS OF PUTTING THE FOUL FELLOW TO FLIGHT, A MISHAP OCCURRED..

MY CAP!

PIP! YOU! OH! YOU'VE DECEIVED ME AGAIN!

NUDINE PRETENDED TO BE VEXED... SECRETLY, HOWEVER, SHE WAS EXTREMELY PLEASED TO KNOW THAT INSIDE THE BODY SHE LOVED WAS A BABY MAN WHO LOVED HER...

...AND, BEING NUDINE, SHE AUTOMATICALLY MADE THE MOST OF THE SITUATION...

I'M HUNGRY! NO, NOT THAT! YOU DON'T LOVE ME ANY MORE! I'M SICK OF FRUIT! I WANT MEAT! ...RED MEAT!

PIP, BEING PIP AND DESPERATE-LY IN LOVE, STROVE EVER HARDER TO PLEASE...

I'M COLD! NO! NOT THAT OLD FUR! I WANT A GRIZZLY CAT RUG! YOU DON'T LOVE ME ANY MORE!

UNTIL ONE DAY HE UNVEILED HIS SUPREME TRIBUTE..

OH! FOR ME? ...WHAT IS IT? IT'S A PEDES-TAL!

NOT QUITE COMPRE-HENDING THE HONOR, (BUT INTENSELY PLEASED ALL THE SAME) NUDINE TOOK HER SEAT..

..ER... NOW WHAT? YOU JUST SIT THERE AND LET ME IDOLIZE YOU!

..AND PIP WENT OFF IN SEARCH OF FOOD. NUDINE, DELIGHTED WITH HER NEW STATION, SAT...

..AND SAT...AND BEGAN TO WONDER..

=YAWN=

...AND THEN.

OH, THE HELL WITH IT!

MEANWHILE PIP, RESPONDING TO A CALL OF NATURE, VACATED THE HUMANOID BODY...

BUT MADE THE MISTAKE OF LEAVING THE HEAD OPEN...

DOMINATED BY THE BIRD'S BRAIN, THE BODY WANDERED OFF, AND WHEN PIP RETURNED..

IT'S GONE!

RUSHING TO THE PEDESTAL TO TELL NUDINE THE AWFUL NEWS, HE FOUND...

OH, NO! NOT HER, TOO!

AND AS IF DIRECTED BY SOME EVIL FATE, THE COLLECTOR CHOSE THAT VERY MOMENT TO MAKE HIS APPEARANCE...

WHERE IS THE BODY, PIPSQUEAK?

WHAT BODY? I AIN'T GOT NO BODY..

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, ANYWAY?

ACCORDING TO SMUG, YOU HAVE ONE ADULT HUMANOID BODY, WHICH RIGHTFULLY BELONGS TO HIM!

NOW, BETTER HAND IT OVER, OR I'LL HAVE PICKLED PIPSQUEAK FOR LUNCH!

AT THAT MOMENT, NUDINE RETURNED, AND IN A FLASH THE ALERT MIND OF PIP SAW THE SOLUTION TO HIS DILEMMA...

OH, PIP.. I'M SORRY, I...

THERE IT IS! THAT'S THE HUMANOID BODY-- TAKE HER!

OH NO! DON'T! PLEASE!

PIP! OH, PIP.. HOW COULD YOU...?

PIP! TELL HIM IT ISN'T TRUE!

I'M GOING TO HAVE A BABY...

YOUR BABY!

LONG AFTER HER CRIES HAD CEASED TO ECHO, PIP STOOD STARING AT NOTHING, AS THE SHADOWS GREW LONG...

...AND, AT LAST TURNED SLOWLY AND ENTERED HIS TREE HOUSE, AND WENT TO BED.

MR. A

by STEVE DITKO

JUSTICE DEMANDS THAT MAN'S PRINCIPLES BE FIXED IN TERMS OF GOOD AND EVIL, BLACK AND WHITE! MAN IS NOT INFALLIBLE! HE IS NOT TO BE JUDGED BLACK IF AFTER UNWITTINGLY COMMITTING AN ERROR, HE TAKES MEASURES TO CORRECT IT! BUT ANY MAN WHO ***DELIBERATELY*** COMMITS AN EVIL ACT WILL BE SO JUDGED AND TREATED ACCORDINGLY! NO MAN SHALL PROFIT FROM CHOOSING TO BE EVIL AT THE EXPENSE OF THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO BE GOOD!

ONLY FOOLS WILL TELL YOU THAT MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL! MONEY IS THE TOOL OF EXCHANGE, A TOOL THAT FIRST MUST BE MADE BEFORE IT CAN BE USED, BEGGED, STOLEN OR EARNED! AND IT HAS TO BE MADE BY THE PRODUCTIVE ABILITIES OF MEN! ***IS THAT EVIL?*** MONEY IS MADE BY AND THE RIGHTFUL TOOL OF HONEST PEOPLE! FOR PEOPLE WHO CAN EXCHANGE THEIR ABILITIES FOR AN EQUAL VALUE - ***MONEY*** AND THAT MONEY IS EXCHANGED FOR AN EQUAL VALUE IN PRODUCTS AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY OTHER MEN'S ABILITIES. ***IS THAT EVIL?*** BEGGARS AND THIEVES EXCHANGE NOTHING FOR THEIR WANTS AND DEMANDS OF SOMEONE ELSES EARNED WEALTH NOR THE CHEATS AND CORRUPTERS WHO KNOWINGLY DEAL IN THE INFERIOR, THE ILLEGAL, AND THE NON-VALUE FOR A TRUE VALUE - MONEY! AND ***THAT IS EVIL!***

PLEASE GIVE ME!

IT'S NOT MINE BUT I NEED IT!

SUCKER! WHY SHOULD I BE FAIR? YOUR LOSS IS MY GAIN!

HERE'S YOUR PAY, YOU EARNED IT!

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IN THE BUSINESS OFFICE FRONT OF RACKETEER, LEW BAGGOT!

NOT A BAD WEEKS EARNINGS FROM THE HOT CAR OPERATIONS, DOPE, GAMBLING AND FENCING SETUPS, RODEN, AND IT'S GOING TO GET BETTER!

I'M WORRIED! REX GRAINE, THE REPORTER IS STIRRING UP TROUBLE FOR YOU! THERE'S TALK THE D.A.'S PUSHING A SECRET INVESTIGATION! LEW, I TOLD YOU TO TAKE IT EASY!

YOU TELL ME NOTHING, RODEN! YOU'RE ONLY MY LAWYER, I PAY YOU TO GET ME OUT OF HOT SPOTS! HERE, THIS BUYS ANSWERS! FIND OUT WHAT THEY GOT ON ME!

BRIBERY!? IT'S TOO RISKY, LEW! IF I GET CAUGHT, I'LL BE DISBARRED!

CAN THAT "ETHICS" GARBAGE, YOU'VE ALREADY SOLD OUT! BESIDES, YOU'RE HOLDING ALL THE ETHICS IN THE WORLD....*MONEY!* IT BUYS AND MAKES EVERYTHING RIGHT! NOW START PROTECTING THE HIGH STANDARD OF LIVING YOU ENJOY BY WORKING FOR ME!

ICER, I HAVE A JOB FOR YOU AND KREBS. LATER, I MAY WANT TO BUY YOUR GUN!

I'M ALWAYS FOR HIRE, LEW! YOU FEED ME THE DOUGH AND I'LL FEED YOUR PROBLEM LEAD POISONING!

HERE, HALF'S YOURS TO SPLIT! I WANT A PEST REPORTER WISED UP! NOTHING FATAL, YET!

WE WON'T TOUCH HIM UNLESS HE INSIST ON REMAINING POOR AND HONEST!

WHILE AT ONE OF THE CITYS NEWSPAPERS.

GREAT, REX, IT'S ANOTHER SCORCHING ARTICLE ON BAGGOT. I JUST HOPE WE GET ACTION FROM THE D.A. BEFORE "HONEST" HENRY MAKES US DROP THIS RACKET SERIES!

WHAT'S BOTHERING OUR FEARLESS PUBLISHER THIS TIME, MAX?

HE SAYS HIS WIFE FEELS THE PUBLIC IS TIRED OF READING ABOUT THE SAME PEOPLE AND PROBLEMS, THAT WE NEED A NEW CRUSADE TO HOLD THE READERS.

DAILY CRUSADER

DAILY CRUSADER

THE OLD STORY! A CANCEROUS SORE BECOMES TOO UNSIGHTLY SO WE COVER IT UP, HOPING IT WILL JUST GO AWAY WHILE WE LOOK FOR SOME OTHER DISEASE TO CURE AND SOON THAT ONE WILL BE COVERED OVER AND THE PATTERN GOES ON! NEVER A CURE AND THE HIDDEN DISEASES ARE SPREADING UNCHECKED, CONTAMINATING EVERYTHING UNTIL NO HEALTHY AREA REMAINS. NOT IN A MAN, NOT IN A SOCIETY! BUT I WON'T BE PUT OFF! I'LL FIND A WAY TO STOP BAGGOT!

GRAINE, I GOT A MONEY MAKING TIP FOR YOU AND IT WON'T COST YOU ANY-THING!

SOMETHING THAT I CAN GET FROM SOMEONE FOR *NOTHING* IS USUALLY JUST WORTH THAT MUCH!

THIS COULD BE YOURS! YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORK FOR IT AND THERE'S MORE WHERE THIS COMES FROM!

THAT'S PARASITES WAGES! I'D BE A LEECH LIKE YOU AND YOUR BOSS, BAGGOT! THERE'S MORE DIGNITY IN BEING A SLAVE THAN ONE OF YOUR BREED!

TAKE IT STUPID, AND STAY HEALTHY OR WE'LL FIND OTHER WAYS OF DEALING WITH YOU!

THERE'S ONLY TWO WAYS...MUTUAL CONSENT OR FORCE! I DON'T AGREE TO DEAL WITH BAGGOTS OR HIS KIND!

I'LL SIGNAL KREBS!

HEY GRAINE!

I WAS HOPING HE'D TURN THE OFFER DOWN!

OKAY, PUNK, WHAT MONEY CAN'T BUY THIS KIND OF TREATMENT ALWAYS DOES!

YOU'LL COUNT STARS INSTEAD OF BILLS, THE ONLY KIND YOU'LL GET NOW WILL BE FROM YOUR DOCTOR!

BAGGOT DESERVES TO GET HIS MONEYS WORTH FROM US.

STUPID PUNK! HE HAD TO LEARN THE HARD WAY... THERE'S NO PROFIT IN TRYING TO STAY HONEST!

GET THE MESSAGE, GRAINE? LAY OFF THOSE ARTICLES OR WE'LL PAY YOU ONE FINAL FATAL VISIT!

SO BAGGOT DOESN'T LIKE THE PRESSURE I PUT ON HIM! NOW WE'LL SEE WHAT HE DOES WHEN HE REALLY GETS SQUEEZED! HE STARTED THE VIOLENCE ... AND LEFT HIMSELF OPEN TO HAVING IT USED AGAINST HIM!

WHILE IN A ALLEY BEHIND THE JUSTICE BUILDING!

BE SMART, PURITY, WHO'S TO KNOW! THIS IS MORE MONEY THAN YOU WILL MAKE IN A YEAR AS D.A.'S ASSISTANT!

YOU...YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS?! WHY BAGGOTS A CROOK!...I CAN'T HELP HIM!

TAKE IT! IF YOU DON'T, SOMEONE ELSE WILL! EVEN IF BAGGOT'S NAILED, SOMEONE ELSE WILL TAKE HIS PLACE SO GET IT WHILE YOU CAN! BESIDES, NO ONE WILL GET HURT!

WHY SHOULDN'T I GET MY SHARE... JUST THIS ONCE! ...EVERYONE ELSE DOES!

DON'T WORRY, PURITY, NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW ABOUT THIS DEAL!

...THERE'LL ALWAYS BE "BAGGOTS"...NO ONE WILL GET HURT AND I SWEAR TO GOD I'LL NEVER DO THIS AGAIN, A MAN'S ENTITLED TO ONE MISTAKE...NOBODY'S PERFECT!

THE *@!!??m D.A.'S MAN SOLD ME OUT! BAGGOT WILL KILL ME FOR FEEDING THE D.A. INFORMATION ON HIS OPERATIONS...WAIT...GRAINE, THE REPORTER, HE'S MY ONE CHANCE!

GRAINE, YOU MUST MEET ME, 9:00 AT WEBBS PIER. I GOT TO TELL YOU ABOUT BAGGOT AN' A LEAK IN THE D.A.'S OFFICE.. PLEASE COME!... ...CLICK!

IT COULD BE THE REAL THING OR A TRAP FOR ME! WELL, I'LL HAVE TO GO AND FIND OUT!

BUT I'LL BE THERE AS EARLY AS I CAN, AND AS MR. A.!

IF THAT CALL WAS ON THE LEVEL, IT COULD BE THE ONE FINAL SQUEEZE I NEED TO CRUSH BAGGOT!

EVEN IF IT IS A TRAP, I COULD USE IT TO MY ADVANTAGE...

CLICK!

...IF INSTEAD OF BEING TRAPPED... I DO THE TRAPPING.

CLICK!

ONE WAY OR THE OTHER BAGGOT'S IN FOR AN EVE-NING HE'LL NEVER FORGET!

PAY OFF TIME, STOOLIE, YOU KNOW BAGGOT HATES THAT FREE SPEECH JAZZ. HE DECIDES WHO TALKS AND HE LIKES TO HAVE THE LAST WORD SO I'M PASSING IT ON TO YOU...I'LL LEAVE YOU SPEECHLESS!

BANG!

I WISH THERE WERE MORE GUYS LIKE YOU, STOOLIE! IT'S TOUGH FOR SPECIALIST LIKE ME TO EARN BIG MONEY UNLESS HE'S KEPT WORKING AT HIS TRADE! I HOPE GRAINE PROVES TO BE AS COOPERATIVE AS YOU!

A SHORT TIME LATER...

AS EARLY AS I WAS... I'M STILL TOO LATE TO HELP HIM!

BY REMOVING THE OPPOSITION, BAGGOT THINKS HE'S DRAWING A NET OF PROTECTION AROUND HIMSELF BUT HE'LL FIND OUT IT WILL ACT AS A NOOSE AROUND HIS NECK!

IN PUBLIC, BAGGOT, AND WITH YOUR LAWYER, YET! YOU MADE SURE YOU HAVE A SOLID ALIBI!

SEE HERE, LT. BRASHER, WHAT'S HOMICIDE HARASSING MY CLIENT FOR? ARREST HIM OR STOP PESTERING HIM!

YOU'RE A CREDIT TO YOUR PROFESSION, RODEN. I'LL BE CHECKING ON YOU BAGGOT, OFTEN...

HA, HA! HE CAN'T PROVE A THING! HE'S JUST TRYING TO BUG ME SO I'M GOING TO LAY LOW FOR A WHILE... IT'LL ALL BLOW OVER!

I WISH YOU HADN'T USED ICER - YOU COULD OF HANDLED IT ANOTHER WAY!

I'LL FIX MY TROUBLES PERMANENTLY! REMEMBER THAT! GO TO YOUR OFFICE, I'LL KEEP IN TOUCH!

THEN, IN THE ALLEY OUTSIDE RODENS OFFICE.

WHERE'S YOUR MURDERING BOSS, RODEN?

WHA! MR. A! HE.. HE LEFT TOWN ...I -I JUST SAW HIM OFF...HONEST!

STAY AWAY! ...IT'S THE TRUTH...I SWEAR IT! YOU HAVE NO RIGHT!...LEAVE ME ALONE.. PLEASE!

A DEAD END, RODEN! NOW YOU BEGIN TO PAY FOR JOINING AND HELPING BAGGOT CONTAMINATE THE CITY! SO START WITH THE TRUTH...WHERE'S BAGGOT?

I TOLD THE TRUTH! STAY BACK! I'LL SWEAR OUT A WARRANT.. I'LL HAVE YOU ARRESTED.. I'LL SMASH.. OOF!

YOU DELIBERATE VIOLATERS OF THE LAW LOSE ALL RIGHTS AND PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW... ANY CONSIDERATION YOU RECEIVE IS CHARITY! BUT DON'T EXPECT IT FROM ME. YOU CHOSE TO PROTECT THE EVIL.. I CHOSE THE GOOD!

I TOLD.. AWK YOU.. GULPP.. AWK.. SPUTT..

AND WHO'S THE LEAK YOU BOUGHT IN THE D.A.'S OFFICE? I WANT THE WHOLE STORY!

HOW..DID.. YOU..AWKKK- I'LL...AWK.. TA..LK.. AKKKK

DON'T LIE OR LEAVE A SINGLE THING OUT!

YOU MAY HAVE A HARD TIME CONVINCING THE GARBAGE MEN YOU DON'T BELONG WHERE YOU ARE!

BUT MINUTES LATER...

WE GOT TO WARN BAGGOT! MR. A. IS ON HIS WAY TO GET HIM!

BAGGOTS PHONE IS OUT OF ORDER, THAT'S WHY I CAME TO SEE YOU!..WE CAN STILL GET THERE IN TIME! I'LL FIX MR. A. FOR GOOD. AND I'LL DO IT FOR NOTHING!

WHEN ICER GETS BACK, I WANT YOU TWO TO KEEP AN EYE ON THAT GUY GRAINE! IF HE DOESN'T PLAY BALL, LET HIM HAVE IT! MAKE IT LOOK ACCIDENTAL AND YOU GET A BONUS!

WE'LL FIX HIM!-THAT'S ICER NOW, I'LL LET HIM IN!

THE TIME HAS COME, BAGGOT!

WHA!.. WHO??

GET HIM!.. THAT'S MR. A.!

YOUR HIRED HAND ISN'T RELIABLE!

WAIT! LET'S TALK THIS OVER! I CAN MAKE IT WORTH YOUR WHILE, FINANCIALLY, MR. A.! WE ALL GOT TO GIVE IN A LITTLE!

THEN YOU'LL SPILL TO THE D.A. ABOUT YOUR WHOLE ROTTEN OPERATION!

YOU'RE NOT FUNNY! I WAS BEING GENEROUS! NOW I'LL PAY YOU OFF LIKE EVERYONE ELSE WHO WON'T DO BUSINESS WITH ME!

YOUR SUDDEN COURAGE HAD TO COME FROM A SETUP LIKE THIS!

*%#!!?% WHY DIDN'T YOU KEEP STRINGING HIM ALONG...

BLANG!

SMASH HIM! WE CAN'T LET HIM GET AWAY ALIVE! OOFF!

YOU HAVE FIRST CRACK AT STOPPING ME, LOUD MOUTH!

HIT HIM WITH SOMETHING! GET HIM DOWN.. WATCH OUT...

STOP SHOUTING ORDERS AND START CLOBBERING HIM.. AGH..

I GOT - THAT BLASTED HEAD PIECE!

IT HELPS WHEN DEALING WITH CREATURES OF YOUR TYPE!

RODEN, BAGGOT, JUMP HIM! OOFF!

SHOW THEM HOW, KILLER!

GO ON YOU FOOL, PICK UP ICER'S GUN AND SHOOT A. PICK IT UP!

BUT.. LEW.. I.. I.. CAN'T.. I ..

I PAY YOU TO DO WHAT I SAY! SHOOT HIM OR WE'RE ALL FINISHED!.. SHOOT ★m*!!?!

PLEASE..I NEVER SHOT ANYONE..., LEW, I.. I.. CAN'T.. OH GOD...

RODEN, YOU *??m@ SHOOT OR I'LL SEE YOU DEAD SHOOT!

NOW, RODEN!

OH, GOD, FORGIVE ME... IT'S NOT MY FAULT!

THE FINAL INSULT, ICER! YOU'VE NOT ONLY BEEN REPLACED BY AN AMATEUR KILLER, YOU'VE BECOME HIS FIRST VICTIM!

BANG! BANG! BANG!

NOW LET'S SEE LAWYER RODEN SAVE KILLER RODEN FROM THE CHAIR! TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT THE RESULTS OF YOUR LATEST JOB FOR BAGGOT!

RODEN WILL TALK HIS HEAD OFF TO KEEP OUT OF THE CHAIR, THAT LEAVES IT EMPTY FOR YOU TO SIT IN, BAGGOT, AND YOU WILL!

NO, MR. A., PLEASE WAIT!

WE CAN STILL MAKE A DEAL. I GOT 100 GRAND HERE.. IT'S ALL YOURS! WE'LL MAKE RODEN A SUICIDE, I'LL CUT YOU IN ON THE RACKETS! 20 PERCENT YOU'LL MAKE A FORTUNE!

HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!

30 PERCENT ... 40 - 50 - 50 EQUAL PARTNERS! YOU CAN EVEN BE BOSS!

HA! HA! HA! HA!

PLEASE, ANYTHING YOU WANT, JUST NAME IT..IT'S YOURS- PLEASE!

HA! HA! I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I WANT AND I WON'T SETTLE FOR LESS!

I WANT TO SEE YOU FINISHED FOR GOOD! YOU'RE A POISONOUS DISEASE, BAGGOT, TO ACCEPT ANY PART OF YOU IS TO ACCEPT CONTAMINATION THAT LEADS TO THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL DECENT VALUES. RODEN IS A PRIZE EXAMPLE! JUSTICE DEMANDS THAT YOU GET NO REWARDS OR CONSIDERATION FOR CHOOSING TO BE THE EVIL THING YOU ARE!

YOU'RE MAD! YOU CAN'T TURN DOWN THIS CHANCE TO MAKE BIG MONEY, TO HAVE POWER, TO CONTROL HALF THE CITY. FORGET THE NOBLE WORDS ... *ONLY DOUGH COUNTS!*

IT'S HOW YOU MAKE AND USE IT! YOU'RE NOT OFFERING ME AN HONEST VALUE - YOU'RE OFFERING ME YOUR WAY OF LIFE! IT'S LIKE TRYING TO SELL A DISEASE TO A HEALTHY MAN!

I GOT TO REACH THAT GUN!

MY MONEY WILL STILL GET ME OUT OF THIS ... IF I USE IT RIGHT!

THIS TIME YOU'RE GOING TO GET WHAT YOU'VE REALLY EARNED!

BAGGOT LUNGES FOR THE GUN BUT HIS FEET SLIP ON THE CRISP BILLS SPILLED ON THE RUG...

YOUR FOUL DEEDS WILL BE ADDED UP AND YOU'LL PAY FOR THEM, NOT WITH STOLEN MONEY--BUT WITH YOUR LIFE!

IT WILL BE THE FIRST HONEST TRADE YOU EVER MADE!

LATER, IN THE D.A.S OFFICE..

BLAST IT, HOW DID BAGGOT KNOW WE HAD AN INFORMER!

WE DON'T KNOW HE DID! IT COULD OF BEEN A GRUDGE KILLING!

I DON'T BUY IT! BAGGOTS CHANGED HIS SETUP. NOW WE GOT TO START FROM SCRATCH! GET BUSY!

HE SUSPECTS A LEAK BUT HE CAN'T PROVE IT!

HE HAD ME TERRIFIED FOR A SECOND BUT NOW I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO WORRY ABOUT! NOBODY CAN PROVE I MADE THAT DEAL--AND FOR A NICE BANKROLL!

BESIDES, ONE LITTLE MISTAKE DOESN'T MAKE ME BAD! I'D NEVER DO IT AGAIN! I'M STILL A DECENT GUY-- IT'S NOT MY FAULT THEY KILL-*WHA*

COME IN *TRAITOR!*

THAT CARD! *MR. A!* NO! I-I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING WRONG!

YOU ROTTEN LIAR! YOU CAUSED A MAN TO BE MURDERED, PURITY, YOU SABOTAGED THE LAW--*YOU SOLD OUT!*

THE POLICE ARE PICKING UP BAGGOT AND HIS BUNCH! I'M HERE TO MAKE SURE YOU PAY FOR WHAT YOU DID! RODEN MARKED THE MONEY HE GAVE YOU-- WHERE IS IT?

NO! NO, HE LIED! YOU CAN'T BELIEVE A CROOKED LAWYER! I SWEAR I'M INNOCENT!

I CAN MAKE YOU TALK LIKE I MADE RODEN AND YOU WILL TALK, PURITY! HOW DO YOU WANT IT?

I-I HID THE MONEY, IN MY APARTMENT! I-I'M NOT A REAL CRIMINAL! PLEASE, GIVE ME A BREAK!

YOU CAN CONFESS TO THE D.A. ON YOUR OWN OR I'LL DRAG YOU IN.. THAT'S IS THE ONLY BREAK YOU'LL GET OR DESERVE!

NO, PLEASE! I'LL GIVE YOU ALL THE MONEY! I DESERVE ANOTHER CHANCE! I'M SORRY- I SWEAR TO GOD I AM! I'LL NEVER DO IT AGAIN! IT-IT'LL JUST BE RODEN'S WORD AGAINST MINE! PLEASE-- HAVE PITY ON ME!

YOU SCUM, YOU BETRAYED THE WHOLE CONCEPT OF JUSTICE! YOU SOLD OUT TO EVERYONE WHO LOOKS TO TO THE LAW AS THE PROTECTOR OF THE INNOCENT. AND WHY DID YOU DO IT? NO ONE PRESSURED YOU, NO ONE THREATEN YOU, NO ONE USED FORCE TO MAKE YOU! IN A BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL WHERE THERE CAN BE NO COMPROMISE YOU WILLINGLY CHOSE TO BE EVILS SECRET ALLY! YOU WANTED THE ADVANTAGES OF BOTH SIDES. MONEY YOU HAVEN'T EARNED. RESPECT YOU'RE NOT ENTITLED TO!

BUT I'M SORRY! SOB!

YOUR SELF IMPOSED BLINDNESS IS OVER! YOU'RE GOING TO FACE UP TO PAY FOR YOUR SELLOUT! GO TURN YOURSELF IN!

OH PLEASE! HAVE PITY! I-I DON'T WANT TO GO TO JAIL! I DIDN'T MEAN ANY HARM... I WON'T DO IT AGAIN.. SOB!

NO, MAX. THAT'S FINAL! YOU CAN'T EXPECT THE PUBLIC TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT LAW AND ORDER EVERYDAY! WE'LL DO A COMICAL CRUSADE ON LITTERBUGS AND PUT GRAINE ON SOMETHING UNCONTROVERSIAL!

BUT, MR. HENRY, WE GOT BAGGOT ON THE RUN.. TO LET UP NOW...

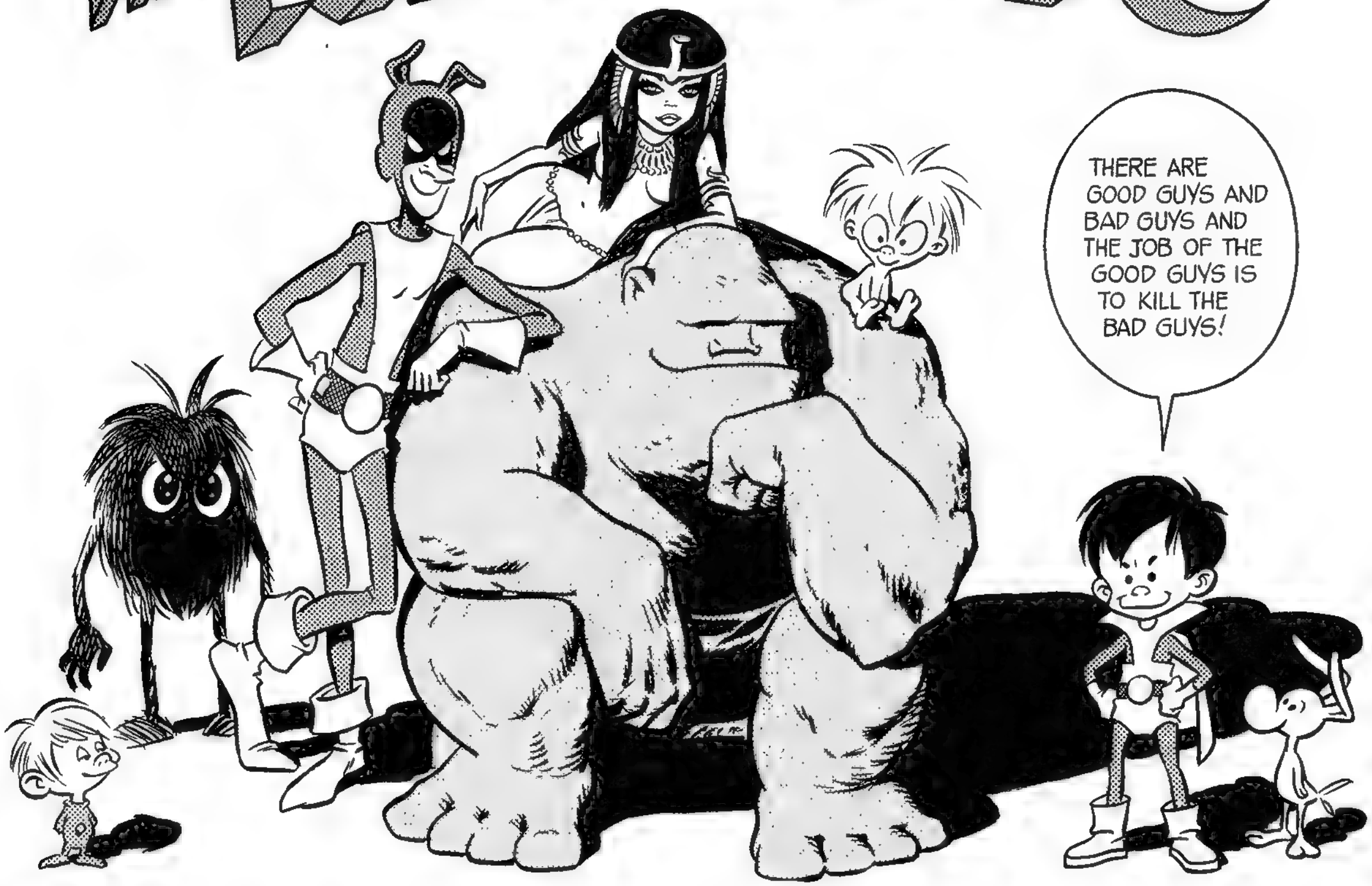
YOU WANT ME TO BREAK IN ON THEIR CONFERENCE?! OKAY REX, IT'S YOUR HEAD!

DAILY CRUSADER

THE END-

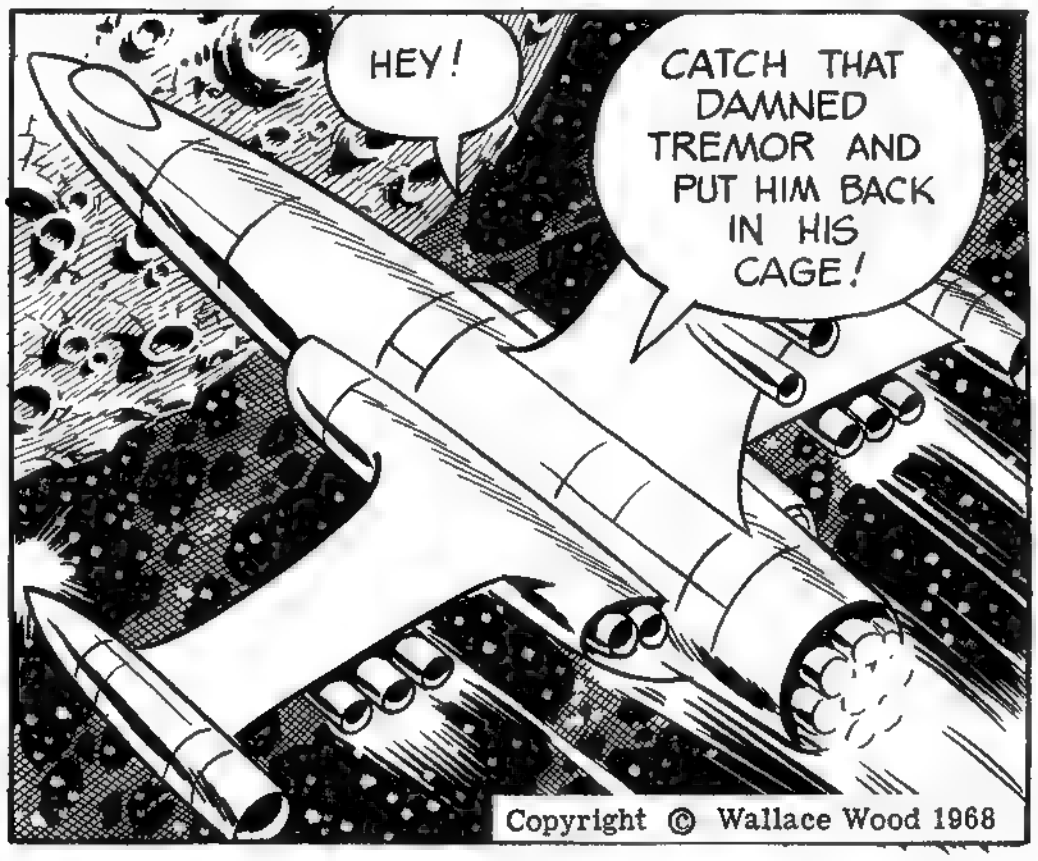
COME WITH US NOW TO HIGH ADVENTURE IN TIME AND SPACE, AS WE JOIN THE JOVIAN GIANT GLOMB (HE'S THE BIG FELLOW IN THE CENTER) AND (SURROUNDING HIM, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) WEE WIT, HAIRY JAMES, THE BLUE BANANA, VENUS, (SHE'S A MARTIAN) DIMENTIUS, I.Q. AND KENNETH BANGHEAD (ALSO PRESENT BUT NOT VISIBLE IS MINIMAN, THE MICROSCOPIC MUTANT), IN A TALE CALCULATED TO REACH A PULSE-POUNDING CRESCENDO OF APATHY WITH THIS AGGREGATION OF HEROES (SOME OF WHOM ARE ACTUALLY FEATURED PROMINENTLY IN THE FOLLOWING STORY...)

THE REJECTS



ONE DAY, AS THE REJECTS HQ LAB SHIP THE "WATT 4" HURTLES THROUGH THE VAST VOID OF OUTER SPACE, AT NEAR-SONIC SPEED ON A SECRET MISSION, (SO SECRET EVEN THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS) NOTHING MUCH IS HAPPENING. IT NEVER DOES...

SUDDENLY, A TREMOR RUNS THROUGH THE SHIP...



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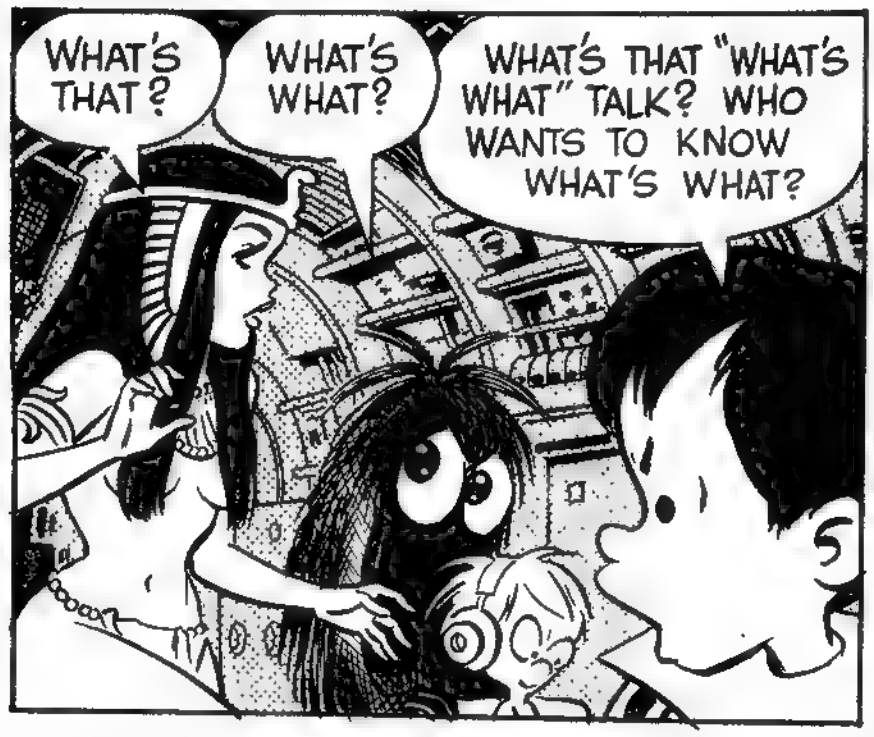
...AND THEN THEY ARE JOLTED BY AN UNEXPECTED VIBRATION (WHICH WE MAY EXPLAIN LATER) CAUSING CONSTERNATION AMONG THE CREW...



I.Q.! I CAN'T JUSTIFY THIS ON THE HYPER-SPACE WARP RATIONALIZER!

THAT'S OKAY, B.B. (SHORT FOR BLUE BANANA).. I'VE ALREADY VECTORED IT ON THE NULL PSIONICS JUSTIFIER...

THIS... IS... TEDDY-POOH!

... AND OFFHAND, I'D SAY WE'VE BEEN TRANSPORTED TO THE PREHISTORIC PAST OF AN ALIEN PLANET ON THE VERY MARGIN OF THE KNOWN UNIVERSE!

THIS IS OBVIOUSLY THE WORK OF L. SPRAGUE DE FREEB!

WHO?

JUSTIFY THAT MARGIN!

ATTENTION ALL HANDS! MAN YOUR POSITIONS! FIRE RETRO BOOSTERS! CUT MAIN THRUST! BATTEN HATCHES AND HEAVE TO!

HEAVE WHAT?

TO WHERE?

PUT GLIDE ANGLE ON THE CYBERNETIC ENTRY PROGRAMMER! REVERSE AUTOMATIC BALLAST! HAVE I FORGOTTEN ANYTHING?

HANG ON FOR THE CRASH!

THERE! ACCORDING TO MY CALCULATIONS WE'VE TOUCHED DOWN..

LIGHT AS A FEATHER!

.. WASN'T IT, WISE ASS?

GLOMB... STEP OUT-SIDE AND TAKE A LOOK AROUND!

YOU... BET! COME...TEDDY-POOH!

WAIT! IT'S A THOUSAND FOOT DROP!

QUICK, VENUS, SEE IF YOU CAN TUNE HIM IN ON THE THOUSAND-FOOT DROP SCANNER!

H E E Y Y Y

A THOUSAND FEET LATER...

WOW! HE PENETRATED A HUNDRED FEET INTO THE PLANET'S CRUST!

GLOMB! SPEAK TO ME!

WATCH... FIRST... STEP! IT'S... A... KILLER!

ER...

I HATE TO MENTION THIS, CHIEF... BUT WE'RE SURROUNDED BY HOSTILE ALIENS!

HMM-OBVIOUSLY THEY ARE LIQUEFACTIONIST DEVIATES, IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZABLE BY THE CHARACTERISTIC BLUE PROTUBERANCE ON THE NETHER PATELLA...

I DON'T SEE ANY BLUE PROTUBER-ANCE...

THAT'S IRRELEVANT!

THE ALIENS PERSUADE OUR HEROES TO ACCOMPANY THEM TO THEIR HABITAT...

LOOK! THEIR HABITAT!

...'AND THE PRIMITIVE BEGINNINGS OF A RUDIMENTARY RELIGIOUS CULTURE CONCEPTUALIZED WITH AN ANTHROMORPHIC PHYSICAL DIETY...

OH, YEAH? WELL, I'VE GOT ONE FOR YOU! WE'RE GONNA PLAY GUESSING GAMES! THE HERMETICALLY SEALED ENVELOPE, PLEASE!

MINIMAN, YOU'D BETTER GO BACK AND HELP GLOMB GET OUT OF THE HOLE...

OKAY!

THIS IS THE RIDDLE OF THE AGES.. GUESS THE CORRECT ANSWER AND YOU GO FREE!

IF WE MISS?

YOU WILL BE LIQUEFIED BY THE LIQUEFACTIONISTS!

READY? HERE IT IS... WHAT WALKS ON FOUR LEGS IN THE MORNING ON TWO LEGS AT NOON AND THREE LEGS AT NIGHT?

I KNOW! I KNOW! I READ THAT ONE YEARS AGO IN SCHOOL!

IT'S MAN!

WRONG! IT'S **ME**!

YOU LOSE!

SUDDENLY...

IT'S TEDDY-POOH TIME!

YUM! PEOPLE SOUP!

HEY! WHAT THE HELL?

BANZA!!

QUICK! WE MUST FLEE! ONLY THE PUNY ONE STANDS IN OUR WAY...

...AND HE IS UNARMED!

I'M NEVER UNARMED WHEN I'M WITH MY HAMMERBIRD!

KEN! NOW!

I HATE THIS! I HATE IT!

SEIZING KENNETH BANGHEAD BY THE FEET, I.Q. LAYS ABOUT HIM LIKE A MADMAN, USING THE HAMMERBIRD'S HARD NOSE AS A WEAPON!

HAVE AT YOU, SCUM!

GIVES ME A SLIGHT NOSE ACHE!

FOUL!

WELL, WE TOOK CARE OF THE LIQUEFACTIONIST DEVIATES. I.Q. NOW LET'S SEE ABOUT GETTING BACK TO THE FUTURE!

I THINK I'VE LOCATED THE TROUBLE I.Q. THE CYBER-NETICALLY PROGRAMMED CHRONOFRAM WAS NOT ACTIVATED!

MAYBE IT'S THE NEGATIVE FACTOR?

...NO, I DON'T THINK SO, IT'S PROBABLY THE SOTWEED FACTOR!

NO, YOU'RE BOTH WRONG! IT'S OBVIOUSLY THE MAX FACTOR!

SOMEBODY GO GET THE KEYS FROM MAX!

?!

WAIT A MINUTE.. WHAT ABOUT L. SPRAGUE DE FREEB?

WHO?

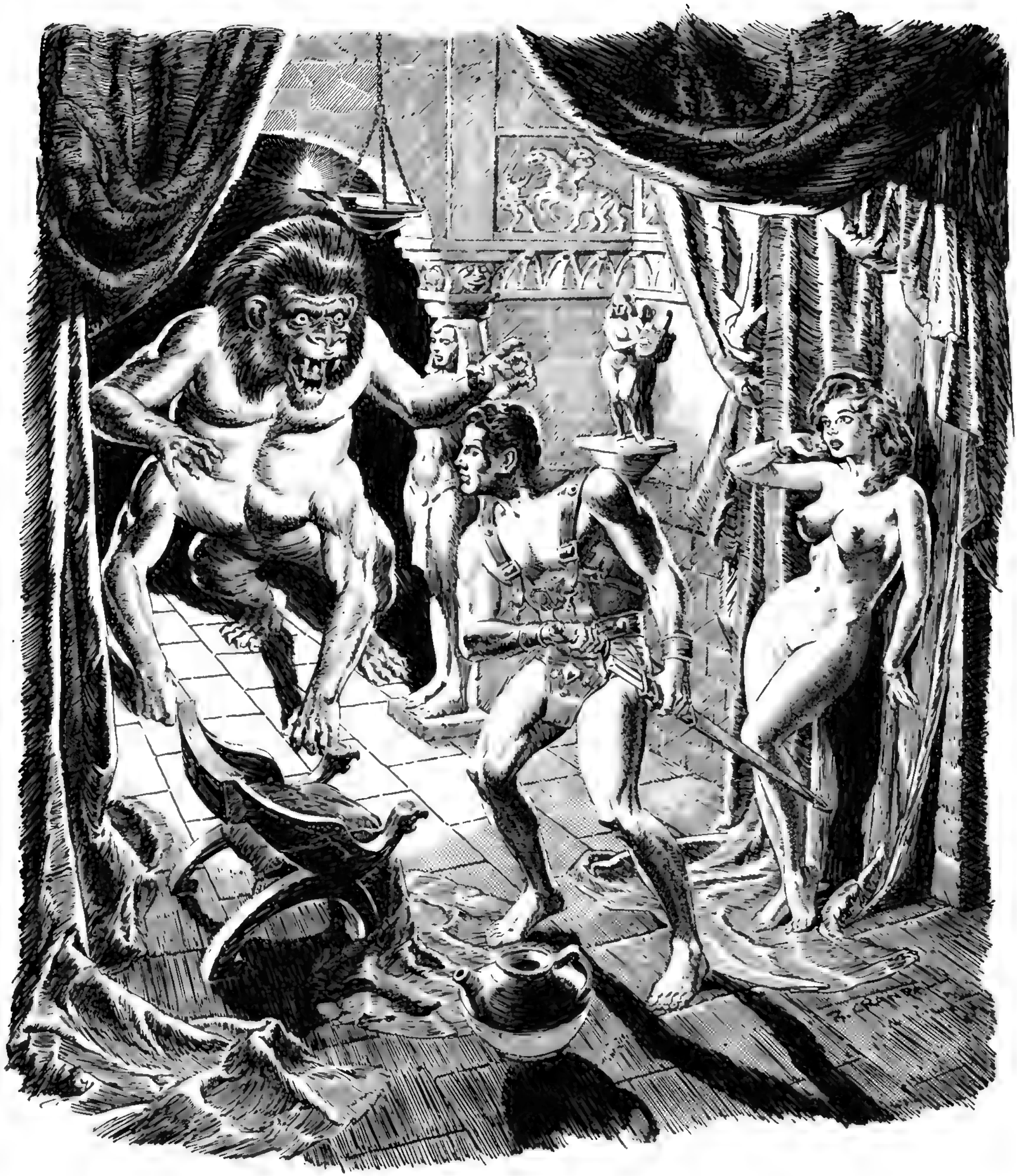
THERE THEY GO! DO YOU LIKE THE REJECTS? THEY LIKE YOU! DON'T FAIL TO MISS THE NEXT THRILLING EPISODE IF YOU CAN....

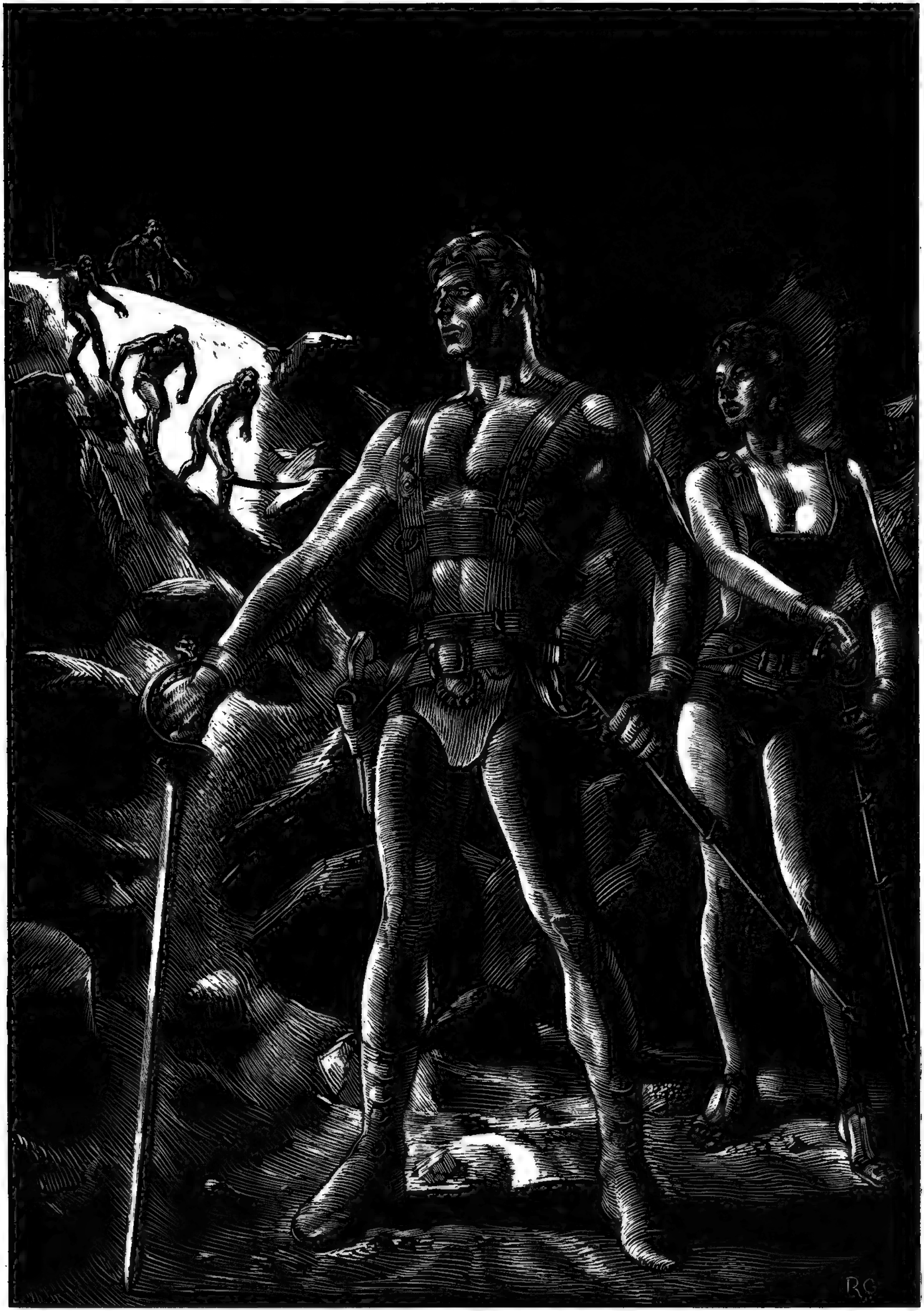
REED CRANDALL- EDG

PART THR

GAR RICE BURROUGHS

EE





A Proper Perspective and several Strange Viewpoints

Art by Dillon

LOATHSOME ROAD

We are pilgrims
In a forbidding world
Which is with us
Eternally
But not too securely
And our commitment to it
Is not great.

Step by step
We stagger through
An endless tunnel in the night
Weak, filthy and afraid
To a destination we dread
More than the journey,

Subterranean islands
Drifting
Beneath an ever-changing,
Treacherously deceptive surface,
Putting forth false tendrils
In a pretense of hope
For warmth and light.

Let us not be daunted
By the inevitable,
For we have nothing to fear
But fear itself.
And that's enough.

Please stop that screaming
Or I shall be forced
To punish you.

PASSERBY

you tell me it will
soon be over i cannot
wait for i want
eternal life
are you sure this is
the way
please be sure for
i have no other course
and the signs have all been
torn down

TO GUMPY

behold
the baby man
bright little face smiling
at the future
sturdy little legs
marching
resolute and unafraid
a stalwart tiny hero
who does not know men fear
and hate what they fear
and kill what they hate and fear
and we are all born free

ANARCHISTS UNITE!
I am the only man you'll find
Upon the earth who feels inclined
Now and then, for recreation
To dynamite a railroad station.

RADIATION PIGS
"Hot stuff!" cried the vendor
Gazing on the inward eye
Which was stamped "Return to Sender,"
As if it were Mom's apple pie.

UP AND AWAY
An intelligent but ignorant youth
One day, when asked what he had read,
Dismissed it all with just a shrug.
"I'd rather write than read," he said.

REGARDS
Love is not all sweet and soft
And not too nice, I fear
For I find I am inclined
To make you whimper, dear.

STEAM HEAT AND
AIR CONDITIONING
We are really rather backward
At least that's what I'm told
In winter suffer from the heat
In summer from the cold.

ONE MORE TIME...
I wish I were the president
For I could run the government
Into debt much faster than
NATO or the Marshall plan.

OBSOLETE OBSERVATION...
"It will not do," the Senator said,
"To speak of price support,
For Parity is Socialist, and
Those Farmers are a shiftless sort!"

MIMEOGRAPHOBIA
Suppose that you've forgotten not,
As oft, one indisposed, should err,
And fortunately dwell upon
The spell, the smell of her.
Then were not better for to do,
Just do, as doing once done did
Than fain again and try anew
To ask, and find what's hid.

Or, better yet, that thought should rend
Such state as we have taken,
Or let our idle fancy sway
The nothingness we're making.
But should, alas, we go our way,
Unknown, to our unknowing,
We never pause, we never try
To show the world a showing.

PSYCHOBESITY
Hail to thee, thou thing,
I dinna ken to bring
We tremblish, sneaky beastie
Art thou corpulent and yeasty?
Come ye then to Mandalay,
Where fishes fly and tourists pay
To see the sons of native earth
Sublimate for all they're worth.

UPTIGHT BANG
The snow is gone, a breath of song
That wanders through the hills along
Carries with it in its flight
In heat of day and cool of night
Joy serene and seems to cast off
Fear, as we prepare to blast off.

INSTANT FUN
I cannot compete much with the best,
And only fumble like the rest.
My art is poor, I must confess
But poor or not, it does express

That thou art and dost remainest
The apple of my oafish eye
Thou pleasest me and makes again
My entrails heave a sigh.

Be not like people of the moon
And in some chance awake, shall do
And not despise the customed tune
But think the matter through.

Forage on and like the how
Begin the must and curse the one
Do the most, undo the now
And do till some is done.

Wood

TOUCH PUDDING
Old Tom Saunders, queer old goat,
  Spring and winter, wore one coat.
Made of Camelshair I think...
  At least I know, it sure did

All four seasons of the year,
  Swathed in fur from ear to ear;
Old Tom cussed and swore and drank
  And dribbled booze on his coat that

All the townsfolk pitied him,
  Prayed he'd repent for his one sin.
They didn't care he was always drunk,
  But I'll say one thing, that coat sure

When old Tom finally passed away,
  They laid him gently on a pile of hay.
But 17 miles up the swamp by boat,
  They burned and buried that goddamned

Pearson

JANE
She wandered and adventured far
A cultured lady, fair of face.
She found a land of brutal rule,
Renounced a life of pleasant grace.

Jane, dear lady, made her choice;
She chose the wilderness with him.
And now the foolish, jeering voice
Accuses her of mortal sin.

Judge not so harshly her decision,
But praise her wealth of tenderness.
The love she grants this primal man
Is all the force behind finesse.

Pearson

GRATIS GRAFFITIS
The preacher in the pulpit stood
And to his congregation said,
"Some dirty bugger's soiled himself..
I'll punch his rotten head!"

Anonymous

THE SNEEZE

HA-CHOO!

BUS STOP

SNIFFLE

KLAK

SNIFFLE...
SNIFFLE...

SHUFFLE

SHUFFLE

SNOOT!

DON'T *EVER* DO THAT!

YOU'LL CLOG UP YOUR SINUSES DOING THAT!

I OUGHT TO KNOW A MILLION DOLLARS FOR PILLS.

PAIN.

SLEEP-LESS NIGHTS.

A YOUNG GIRL LIKE YOU.

IT'S A SHAME, I'LL TELL YOU.

WHO'S THIS YOYO?

I SAW YOU HOLDING IN YOUR LEFT NOSTRIL!

"NOSTRIL"!

I KNOW *HIS* GAME.

NEXT IT'LL BE "*HOW 'BOUT IT, BABE*".

THEN "TITS"

script by BILL PEARSON art by GRASS GREEN

THAT JUST BLOWS ALL THAT SNOT BACK INTO THE EARBALLS„

HE'S COMING OVER

BACK INTO THE SINUSES„

RIGHT HERE

HE'S A FEELER

SHOULD I BELT HIM?

LOOK AT *ME!*

A MERE SCRAWNY SHELL OF THE MAN I ONCE WAS!

AN *EXHIBITIONIST!*

DARE I OPEN MY EYES?!

ALREADY I CAN SEE SIGNS OF EMACIATION.

YOUR RIBS STICKING OUT.

NO MEAT AT THE WAIST.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING!

WHIT-T!

A WOMAN SHOULD BE *FULL* IN THE HIPS

CHILDBEARING IS STILL THE CHIEF DUTY OF THE HUMAN FEMALE!

PEOPLE ARE LOOKING!

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

THOSE PEOPLE LOOK STRANGE

JESUS! I THINK HE TOUCHED MY THING!

WOULD YOU BURDEN THE STRUGGLE OF YOUR PROGENY TOWARD *LIFE?!*

DID HE TOUCH HER THING?!

I CAN'T SEE!

I CAN'T *SEE!*

IF SHE'S BEING MOLESTED, SHE'D COMPLAIN.

MUST BE A FOREIGN RITUAL.

SHE'S CUTE.

THERE'S SO MUCH I DON'T KNOW.

I MUST BE IMAGINING THINGS

IF I'M BEING MOLESTED, THESE PEOPLE WOULD OBJECT!

HUUMM... PECTORAL DEVELOPMENT SATISFACTORY...

IF I POSTDATE THE RENT CHECK, I CAN PICK UP THE TIRES TOMORROW..

SHALL I STOP IN FOR A BEER, OR.

HAIRY EARS..

$\frac{RX^2 \times 10M}{O \times 9^9 Q}$ ZMM, 2R

THEY'RE LEAVING.

WHAT DO I TELL THIS BIRD?

"TAKE YOUR PAW OFF MY THIGH, BUSTER!" ?

TOO SILLY.

THIS IS *SERIOUS!*

"PLEASE MISTER, I'M A VIRGIN!" ?

TOO PHONEY..

YOU'RE NOT LISTENING TO ME, ARE YOU?

I MUST LOOK LIKE AN EASY MARK.

I *KNEW* I LOOKED TOO LOOSE AS A BLONDE.

YOU SHOULD JUST REAR BACK AND *BLOW!*

BOTH BARRELS AT ONCE.

SOMEBODY TOLD ME THAT ONCE, AND I NEVER FORGOT.

WHAT'S THIS TALK ABOUT NOSES?

HIS *MIND* IS BLOWN!

NOBODY LISTENS ANYMORE.

SICK YOURSELF UP, GIRL, SEE IF I CARE.

8TH AVE

CITY TRANS BUS #1

I'VE BEEN RAPED BY A MADMAN.

CITY TRANSIT

AND MISSED YOUR BUS.

Virtue Ever Triumphant

LONG AGO, IN A LAND TOO DISTANT TO MEASURE, A MAIDEN NAMED KALOON WAS HELD CAPTIVE BY A DRAGON. KALOON HAD BEEN A PRISONER SO LONG THAT SHE LOST TRACK OF TIME; AND THE DRAGON, THOUGH NEVER FAILING TO FEED HER, TORMENTED HER CONTINUALLY. SHE KNEW NOT THE DRAGON'S PURPOSE IN KEEPING HER, AND THOUGHT IT BETTER NOT TO GUESS.

IN THIS WAY SHE LIVED, THEN, FOR MANY YEARS. AND THEN, ONE DAY, FOR THE FIRST TIME, A STRANGER HAPPENED INTO THE DRAGON'S HIDDEN VALLEY.

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KENDALL, THE WANDERER, WAS A MAN OF GALLANTRY AND DARING · HIS HEROIC FEATS WERE FABLED ALL ACROSS THE LAND · HE SOUGHT NEW ADVENTURE, AND HE HAD HEARD TALES OF AN ANCIENT DRAGON EXISTING SOMEWHERE IN THIS UNCHARTED VASTNESS ·

HOLD, STEED ! WHAT IS THAT MOVEMENT ··· IN YON FAR PASS ?

THE MOVEMENT KENDALL VIEWED WAS YET ANOTHER STRANGER ! THIS WAS VERLE THE CRAVEN : GALLANTRY AND DARING WERE QUALITIES OF WHICH HE WAS IGNORANT, EXCEPT WHEN HE SAW AND ENVIED THEM IN OTHER MEN · HAVING BEEN EXILED FROM HIS HOMELAND FOR ATROCITIES TOO UNTHINKABLE TO MENTION, HE NOW WANDERED BY CHANCE INTO THE VALLEY ·

OH, THE DEVIL ! I RECOGNIZE THAT MAN ! IT'S KENDALL, THE PURE ! ··· CAN I NEVER ESCAPE THE PATHS OF SUCH UNTAINTED SWINE ?

HO, STRANGER !

HO, STRANGER ! HOW COME YOU TO THIS GOD-FORSAKEN COUNTRY ?

VERLE THE CRAVEN, MASTER OF DECEIT AND TREACHERY, SAID THAT HE SOUGHT MANLY ADVENTURE ··· EVEN AS HE SILENTLY CONSIDERED MURDERING KENDALL FOR HIS FINER STEED AND RAIMENT ·

"GOOD FORTUNE !" CRIED KENDALL · "I TOO SEEK ADVENTURE ··· OF, AS YOU SAY, THE MANLY SORT ··· AND I AM ON THE TRAIL, IN THIS SELF-SAME VALLEY, OF A FOUL, EVIL *DRAGON* !"

VERLE, THOUGH HIS BLOOD RAN COLD AT MENTION OF SUCH A BEAST, FEIGNED ENTHUSIASM ·

EXCELLENT FINE FORTUNE, KENDALL ! WE SHALL HUNT THE OBSCENE CREATURE TOGETHER ··· DOUBLE OUR CHANCE TO DESTROY IT UTTERLY !

DONE, FRIEND VERLE ! YOU ARE A MAN OF COURAGE !

THE NOBLE KENDALL AND THE COWARDLY VERLE SOON FOUND THE TRACK OF THE BEAST, AND FINALLY, LATE THAT AFTERNOON…

THERE IT IS!… PEERING INTO THAT CAVE!

SO IT IS! FINE SPOTTING, VERLE. NOW, LET US CIRCLE THE THING AND FIND A REAR ENTRANCE TO THE CAVE…

…AND DISCOVER THE OBJECT OF THE DRAGON'S RAPT ATTENTION… *HERE* IT IS!

KENDALL AND VERLE SOON CAME UPON THE SHACKLED FORM OF KALOON, UNSEEN BY THE LOATHSOME DRAGON. THE HELPLESS MAIDEN BESEECHED THE AID OF THE TWO MEN—

HAVE NO FEAR, FAIR DAMSEL. YOUR RESCUE …AND THE EXTINCTION OF THAT BLASPHEMOUS BEAST… ARE IMMINENT.

WELL SAID, VERLE! YOU GO OUT NOW, THE WAY WE ENTERED, AND TAUNT THE VILE CREATURE; WHEN HE LOOKS AWAY FROM THE GIRL, I SHALL FREE HER…

…AND TOGETHER YOU AND I SHALL SLAY THE MONSTER.

AN EXCELLENT PLAN. I GO NOW TO TAUNT HIM.

SOON THE DRAGON CEASED HIS FEARFUL WATCH OVER KALOON…

I AM GLAD IT IS YOU WHO FREES ME, GOOD KENDALL… I SENSE EVIL ABOUT THE ONE NAMED VERLE.

WHAT? NONSENSE! MY FRIEND VERLE IS AS WORTHY AS THAT DRAGON IS EVIL!

BUT AS KENDALL AND KALOON STARTED TO LEAVE THE CAVERN, THE DRAGON LOOKED AGAIN INSIDE —

EEEE-E-EE!! KENDALL, HELP ME!!

COURAGE, KALOON!!

AMID A SPRAY OF CRUMBLED STONES, THE FURIOUS DRAGON, SCREAMING WITH PAIN AND RAGE, THRUST HIS HEAD INTO THE SMALL CAVE OPENING ...

...AND THE QUICK-WITTED KENDALL MADE CERTAIN IT WOULD NEVER LEAVE!

THE FORTUNATE MAN AND WOMAN ESCAPED TO SEE THE HIDEOUS RESULTS OF KENDALL'S HANDIWORK.

POOR VERLE MUST HAVE LOST HIS LIFE TO THE DRAGON!...ELSE THE BEAST WOULD NOT HAVE RETURNED TO ITS VIGIL!

PERHAPS, KENDALL. BUT I SUSPECT HE IS SAFE ... CARING LITTLE ABOUT OUR FATES. AGAIN I SAY, I TRUST HIM NOT.

THAT NIGHT, THEY MADE A CAMPSITE IN WHICH TO REST FOR THE FOLLOWING DAY'S JOURNEY TO CIVILIZATION. — WHILE, LURKING IN THE SHADOWS…

…SPIED THE TREACHEROUS VERLE, THE CRAVEN!

THE NEXT MORNING, AS KENDALL AND KALOON MADE READY TO RIDE …

OH! *VERLE!*

EEE--UMPH

QUIET, ME PROUD BEAUTY! I'LL SHOW YOU JOYS SUCH AS THAT MILKSOP KENDALL COULD NOT HOPE TO DREAM!

I AM THUNDERSTRUCK! KALOON'S WORST SUSPICIONS ARE REALIZED!

YOU THINK ME A CRAVEN COWARD, EH, FAIR KALOON? SAY NOT SO! FOR EVEN NOW I MAKE A STAND… TO FACE YOUR NOBLE KENDALL!

HO HO! IN YOUR DESPICABLY CHIVALROUS HASTE, YOU NEGLECTED TO BRING YOUR SWORD! NOW TASTE THE STING OF MINE!

EMPTY-HANDED BUT NOT EMPTY-HEADED, THE RESOURCEFUL KENDALL QUICKLY SEIZED A SMALL LOG, JUST AS VERLE DELIVERED THE WOULD-BE DEATH-BLOW!

THWACK!

EVIL VERLE! UNWORTHY DOG!! THE TABLES NOW ARE TURNED!

KENDALL AND KALOON LEFT VERLE'S BODY FOR THOSE SCAVENGERS AS WOULD TOUCH IT. AS THEY RODE WEARILY TOWARD THE CITY, THEY PROFESSED THEIR ETERNAL DEVOTION TO ONE ANOTHER.

PRESENTLY, THEY MET ANOTHER STRANGER.

...AND HERE IS A TRAITOR'S REWARD!!

HELLO, GOOD PEOPLE! I AM PATRICK. I SEEK NOBLE CAUSES IN WHOSE NAME TO DO BATTLE. AND WHO ARE YOU? WHERE DO YOU GO?

KALOON LOOKED AT THE NEW WARRIOR, EVEN MORE HANDSOME AND STRONG THAN THE BATTLE-WEARY KENDALL; AND THEN SHE LOOKED AT KENDALL; AND AGAIN AT PATRICK.

I AM KALOON; BUT THIS IS NO "GOOD PERSON". HE IS KIDNAPPING ME!... AM I NOT A NOBLE ENOUGH CAUSE FOR YOU?

PATRICK, WITH A JOYOUS SHOUT, AGREED THAT KALOON WAS INDEED A NOBLE ENOUGH CAUSE IN WHOSE NAME TO DO BATTLE.

END

The World of the Wizard King

the world of the wizard king

by wallace wood

"Know then, that it is not the function of prophecy to delineate coming events. The existence of the prophecy is in itself a catalyst in the shaping of the future; specifically in causing men to take steps to implement or to thwart its realization. Therefore, no prophecy can literally come true, for as soon as it is uttered, it has altered the course of events."

The Chronicle of the King of the World

Prologue

The old gods were dead, all save the great Iam. And he was dying. Gods, as you know, are vulnerable in that their power is derived from and dependent on the belief of their worshippers. Iam had been declining for thousands of years, and now there was just one believer left, a lonely dwarf in the far Fens, performing an occasional ritual sacrifice, and he was very old, and sick.

It had begun with the downfall of Aristos, the immortal Wizard King. For centuries he had ruled the world, a reign distinguished by peace and justice, and the forces of evil had been vanquished... but not destroyed. The Old Ones, inhuman forces that had ruled the world when it was young, brooded and bided their time, and gathered strength from the weak and corrupt.

The day came at last when they were ready, and, led by the Demon Horrob, moved against the King and Iam. Horrob, though elevated to Godhood by the worship of his human and elemental followers, was still unable to confront Iam directly, and launched a series of natural disasters against his temples. While Iam was occupied in coping with this threat, Horrob's mortal accomplices prepared a trap for the King.

The first step had already been taken, the abduction of the half-Elf Queen, Elva, a tiny beauty greatly beloved by Aristos. This had been easily arranged by Lord Zor, the King's most trusted noble, who had, in his envy and greed, committed his soul to Horrob. Zor then reported her whereabouts to Aristos, who hastened to the spot, accompanied by the treacherous Lord and a handful of guards, also conspirators.

The King, seeing his Queen's limp form bound to a tree, ran to her side, drawing his great sword Ironsteel and looking about uneasily as he did so, for he suspected an ambush. Seeing no possible concealment for assassins, he turned his attention to the Queen's bonds, for he could not know that the tree itself was the menace.

And then it struck. Twigs sharp as steel talons raked the King's arm and shoulder before he could react. Leaping back, the wounded Aristos realized the extent of his danger, for this could only be the ancient and evil Tree of Death, whose poison would have killed a mortal instantly. Though he could not die, in a matter of moments the King knew he would be unconscious and at the mercy of his enemies, and so he lunged forward and thrust his sword into the trunk of the tree with all his might.

The tree screamed and died, its life blood gushing out. The sword, Ironsteel, remained half-buried in the great trunk, as Immortal Aristos, King of the World, fell to the ground. And then the followers of Horrob were upon him. Before the Queen's horrified gaze, they struck his head from his body, and proceeded to dismember him—and gasped in horror! For the severed head looked up at them, and spoke.

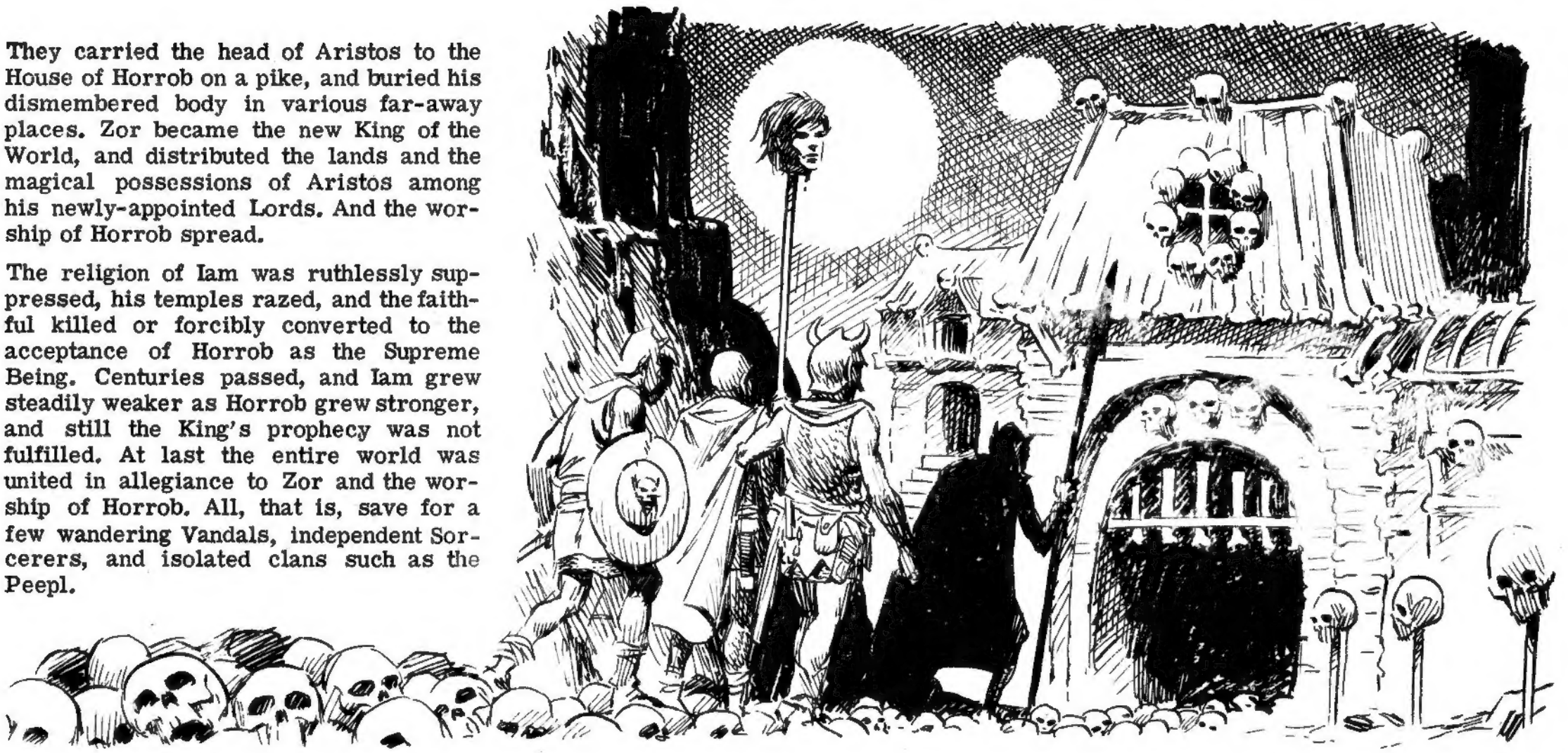
"You have not won, for I am the Wizard King and I cannot die. One day one who is pure in heart will draw the sword from the tree, and rally the forces of good in my name.

"The power of the sword is such that you dare not touch it, or even draw near it. Do what you will you cannot alter your fate. My Queen will sleep now, to wake when I return. You, Lord Zor, will wait for me. You shall not die until I reclaim my throne, though it be a thousand years. And then you will beg me for death.

"As for you," his eyes swept over the trembling guards, "You may die now." And such was the power of the King's mind, that the helpless wretches drew their swords and cut each other down. Lord Zor fled the scene and never returned, sending a party of lackeys to collect the King's remains.

They carried the head of Aristos to the House of Horrob on a pike, and buried his dismembered body in various far-away places. Zor became the new King of the World, and distributed the lands and the magical possessions of Aristos among his newly-appointed Lords. And the worship of Horrob spread.

The religion of Iam was ruthlessly suppressed, his temples razed, and the faithful killed or forcibly converted to the acceptance of Horrob as the Supreme Being. Centuries passed, and Iam grew steadily weaker as Horrob grew stronger, and still the King's prophecy was not fulfilled. At last the entire world was united in allegiance to Zor and the worship of Horrob. All, that is, save for a few wandering Vandals, independent Sorcerers, and isolated clans such as the Peepl.



The Peepl, as they called themselves, were a highly civilized and warlike race of Elves, who, dwelling in the depths of a primordial forest, had remained aloof from the events of the outside world. Their entire nation was one huge family, and all attempts to keep track of relationships had long since been given up. For instance, Odkin the Sly (with whose exploits this narrative will be largely concerned) was the forty-seventh son of Idward the Peculiar, although the Peepl did not think in those terms. Due to their extreme longevity, Odkin and his father appeared to be the same age, and could have been brothers. In a sense they were, for they both had the same mother.

Very affectionate, and with strong family feelings, their numbers increased steadily. Multiple births were frequent, and it was not uncommon for a mother to have a hundred children in her lifetime. Which was fortunate, for in this hostile world the mortality rate was very high. And, being smaller than most of their enemies, the Peepl found it advisable to have numerical superiority in a fight. (The Peepl, by the way did not regard themselves as small; anyone larger was a Giant.) In any case, hand-to-hand combat was a last resort, for they were the world's best archers.

Highly ethical beings, they punished every infraction of their internal tribal rules of conduct with death, and turned all of their natural aggression outward on their neighbors. For thousands of years they had lived in comparative isolation, escaping the notice of the ruling powers, and their tax collectors, recruiting agents and clergy. Living full, happy lives in their snug Elf houses, eating, drinking and loving, they were content, not having any poets or philosophers.

Nor did they have any organized form of religion. It was not that the Peepl did not believe in the Gods. (There was no question of that, for the Gods were very much in evidence.) Rather, they did not cherish any great enthusiasm for them, and took pains not to attract their attention.

Iam's strength was nearly gone now, and he no longer dared venture from the ruins of his one remaining temple, but lingered on in the dusty alcoves like a reluctant ghost, and the spark of divine life dimmed and threatened momentarily to flicker out. Some years before, he had attempted to occupy the body of a small child who had wandered into the ruins, but had been too weak and had been defeated by the child's mind. Since that time he had been growing more resigned day by day.

But the will to survive dies hard, and one day as he stared moodily into space, an insect caught his eye. It was a Fleafly, one of the smallest of creatures. Perhaps for that very reason, the idea came to him. A moment later, he had occupied its body.

Not really expecting to succeed, he attempted a few miracles, (small ones), in the hope of inspiring some belief in the other insects. But they paid him no mind, being much too advanced for that sort of thing. And so Iam left his temple and began his last-minute search for a way to cheat his fate, knowing that his days were drawing to a close.

Chapter One

"The Reluctant Hero"

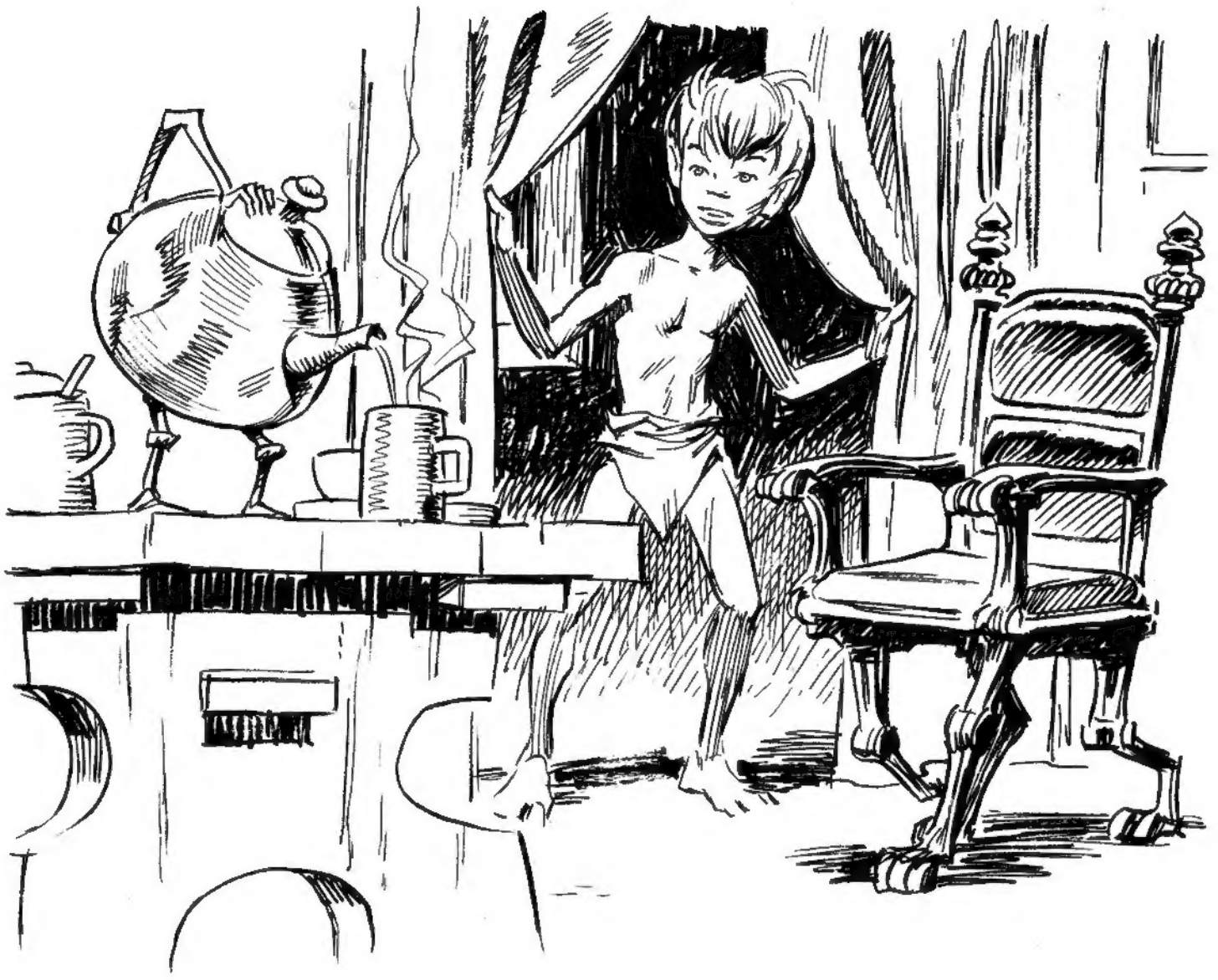
"Get up!"

Odkin stirred restlessly. The voice had been continuing for some time, he realized. "Just a few minutes more..." he whined, neither awake nor asleep. Then it dawned on him to inquire, drowsily, "Who ...who said that?" "I did!" the bed replied. "I am not," Odkin murmured, "accustomed to being addressed by furniture." And turned over, clutching his pillow. "Get up!" the bed repeated. Lowering its foot and raising its head, it deposited him on the floor. "Breakfast is ready in the next room."

And so it was. A steaming bowl of cereal waited, a chair walked over to the table as a battered teapot poured itself. Somewhat dazed, Odkin sat down. "This house," he remarked, "is alive." "It is indeed." Odkin started, for the voice seemed to come from no particular source. "I foresaw," it continued, "that you would be coming here, and prepared my house for you. But you must be hungry. Eat, and then we shall talk."

Surprised at his own aplomb, Odkin attacked the food with his customary voracity, and as he did so, pondered the events that led him here.

It had seemed, he reflected, a fortuitous series of circumstances that had brought his armed band to take the Cavewood route, for they had encountered a caravan of Merchant Vandals and offered them an eminently reasonable exchange. In return for their goods, weapons and clothing, he had proposed to allow them to depart with their lives.



The Vandals, a singularly unimaginative group, refuted the logic of Odkin's view, and in the following discussion lost half their number. But an unexpected force made its appearance, for the caravan of Vandals had been escorted by a party of Commercial Volunteers.

These mercenary guards were famous for their disregard of life and limb, and their presence seemed to indicate a prearranged trap, with the Vandals as the bait. And so, bowing to the inevitable, the Elves followed the only prudent course. Led by Odkin, they withdrew into the forest and dispersed, as the mercenaries were engaged by a rear guard, which, as it happened, was comprised of the slowest runners.

Presently, finding himself alone and with the sounds of pursuit growing faint, Odkin stopped to rest. Then he realized, with a shock of fear, that he had entered the Forbidden Land. No one had ever returned from this part of the forest, which was reputed to be the habitat of a frightful Demon or Wizard, or perhaps of both. Skirting about, he attempted to leave without encountering the mercenaries again, and then he came upon the doorway.

It was growing dark, and he could not trust the evidence of his senses, but he was certain that no dwelling was visible. However, directly before him, a door suddenly yawned invitingly, and, since he calculated that his chances for survival were minimal at any rate, he went in.

Finding the dimly-lit interior deserted, he had called repeatedly, and, receiving no answer, had lain down on the bed and had fallen asleep instantly. Now, thinking of the manner in which he had been awakened, he was stirred to ask, "Please, sir—whoever you are—what is this place, and how did you foresee my coming?"

"My name is Weer," the voice replied, "And I see all things that do not exist here and now." Not content with this answer, but not knowing precisely how to further his line of questioning, Odkin sipped his tea and waited. Nothing happened for some minutes, and then a flicker of movement across the room caught his eye. At first he saw only a blur, then he was able to distinguish a tiny face suspended in midair.

The face grew until it had assumed the proportions of a human head, and eyes as cold as the winter moon regarded him. Odkin became increasingly uneasy under this silent surveillance, when at last the Wizard spoke.

"Well," he muttered, "You are not very big, and I am not at all sure of your character, but you are better than nothing!" "What do you mean?" cried Odkin, somewhat alarmed. "What do you want of me?" "You are my champion—or rather, the world's champion. You will be the one to fulfill the prophecy of the King and restore peace and justice to the down-trodden and oppressed people of the world." The sincerity of his utterance was only slightly diminished by the gleam of pure avarice in his eyes.

"But—what am I do do?" the elf faltered.

"You will be the one to reclaim Ironsteel, the sword of the King of the World, from the trunk of the Tree of Death. Your arrival was preordained, and now the fate of the world hangs on your meager shoulders."

"I won't do it!" Odkin declared, and instantly fell to the floor, clutching at his head.

"Wait!" he cried, and the pain subsided. "I must know what is involved and what you hope to accomplish." He was stalling, but almost sincere in his ignorance, for the merest fragment of the legend of Aristos had reached the Peepl. "I am not sure that I can agree unless we discuss—" Again he dropped, writhing in agony.

"As I was saying," he remarked, "I shall be only too happy to do whatever is good for the fate of the world."

"Good!" the head replied, and vanished, leaving a hole in the air. "Enter the opening. It will enable you to take a short-cut to the vicinity of the Tower of the Tree." The elf complied, and as he approached the utter darkness of the hole, it expanded until he was engulfed in it.

For a time, how long he was never sure, he moved through the blackness, not certain whether he was walking or floating, or if indeed any solid footing existed beneath him. And then he saw the light, first just a pin point, but growing steadily larger, and with a rush he plunged out into daylight and a landscape of barren rocks and hills.

"What now?" he inquired, not really expecting an answer. But the voice of Weer replied. "Just over that ridge is the tower. King Zor caused it to be built around the tree hundreds of years ago to discourage this type of endeavor, however, you will enter, remove the sword and bring it to me."

"But why? Surely I have a right to—"

"The less you know of your mission the better it will be. Perhaps I shall explain later, but now go and get me the sword!" Fearing a recurrence of the pain, Odkin started off toward the crest. Soon he was looking down upon the tower, a pile of stone with a decidedly uninspiring aspect. A single Ogre guard nodded near the gate, and otherwise no signs of life were evident. Noticing an aperture halfway up the wall on the side hidden from the sentry, Odkin edged cautiously toward it.

The crude stone offered hand-holds aplenty, and he made his way easily to the opening, which was just big enough to admit his elf body. Presently he was in the courtyard, confronting the tree. Its massive ugliness repelled him, yet he drew near, and stopped before the cold, lifeless beauty of the Queen, who still was tied to the trunk. (Zor had attempted time and again to send his evil minions to remove her to his palace, but each venture had resulted in death.)

Trembling, he approached and tentatively touched the sword. Summoning all his resolve, he grasped it, put both his feet against the trunk, then pulled mightily. And nothing happened. The sword remained.

"I do not understand this," he mused, "I am pure in heart, am I not?" And he tried again, and failed. For a long moment he stood lost in thought. Suddenly he seized a huge rock and smashed it against the sword with all his wiry strength.

With a deafening crack, the magic blade snapped!

The sun went out. No clouds obscured it, nothing eclipsed its light, it simply dimmed and the sky grew dark.

In the house of Horrob, someone screamed. Zor, startled, looked up...and saw that the eyes of Aristos were open! As he stared into them, the usurper felt his flesh crawl, for they glowed with the cold reptilian glitter of madness.

Half a continent away, a Fleafly abruptly halted its aimless fluttering. As if drawn by a lodestone, it headed, straight as an arrow, toward the Tower of the Tree.

To be continued.

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